

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION  
AT  
MANOR FARM, ASTON  
SOMERVILLE,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Tom Rogers

Illustrations by Tom Rogers and Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Project P2861  
Report 1424  
WSM 34778



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# **Archaeological Evaluation at Manor Farm, Aston Somerville, Worcestershire**

**Tom Rogers**

## **Part 1 Project summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Manor Farm, Aston Somerville, Worcestershire (SP04053767). It was undertaken on behalf of DND Holdings Ltd, who intend to demolish a single storey former agricultural building and erect a new industrial building on an adjacent site of a 760m<sup>2</sup>. A planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological site was present and if so to indicate its location, date and nature. A complex of features (WSM 05506, WSM 05510) thought to be of prehistoric and Romano-British date has been identified from aerial photography in the field to the west of the development site, next to the River Isbourne.

The brief specified that the entire area of the proposed development should be stripped of topsoil to natural subsoil or to a level where archaeological features were present. However the presence of overhead power lines and below ground services curtailed the area that could be assessed. Accordingly five trenches were excavated, one of which was abandoned when a further service was uncovered.

Topsoil overlay mixed subsoil, which in turn overlay an olive green relatively stoneless clay. No finds or features of archaeological significance were recorded. A modern pig burial was uncovered in trench 1 which crossed the centre of the site.

## Part 2 Detailed report

### 1. Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Manor Farm, Aston Somerville, Worcestershire (NGR SP04053767), (Fig 1), on behalf of DND Holdings Ltd. The client intends to demolish an existing building and build a replacement adjacent and has submitted a planning application to Wychavon District Council (reference W/01/2018), who consider that a site of archaeological interest may be affected (WSM 05506).

#### 1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IFA 1999)

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (HEAS 2002) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2005).

#### 1.3 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to identify whether deposits associated with the adjacent settlement extend into the development area, to date any such features as far as possible and to establish how they relate to the adjacent settlement site.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Documentary search

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition the following sources were also consulted:

#### *Cartographic sources*

- Ordnance Survey 1888, 1905, 1930 [extracts from] Worcestershire, Sheet SP 04 SE and SP03 NE
- Ordnance Survey 1999, Worcestershire and the Malverns, 1:50,000 Landranger, sheet 150
- Aston Somerville tithe, 1837, transcribed by Guyattt, D A, WRO BA 4020/2 r 892

### 2.2 Fieldwork methodology

#### 2.2.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2005). Fieldwork was undertaken on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006. The site reference number and site code is WSM 34778. Although the brief (HEAS 2002) required that the entire area of the proposed development be stripped of topsoil, the actual area was restricted firstly by the presence of overhead power lines, from which a buffer zone of 6m was marked out and avoided; and

secondly the presence of underground services on the site detected visually and by Cable Avoidance Tool.

Accordingly five trenches, amounting to just over 96m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated between the services, over the area of 760m<sup>2</sup>, representing a sample of 12.65%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. Trench 4 was abandoned because a further electric cable was uncovered.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a JCB type excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (CAS 1995). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

### 2.2.2 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

### 2.3 The methods in retrospect

Having undertaken the project the following comments may be made with regard to the fieldwork. A comprehensive archaeological investigation of the site could not be achieved due to the presence of numerous services in the form of overhead power lines, underground electric cables, and foul and water pipes.

## 3. Topographical and archaeological context

Aston Somerville is a small village situated on fairly flat land about 4km south of Evesham in the Vale of Evesham about 1.5km east of the River Isbourne. The subject site is to the west of a minor road that leads to Wormington and lies about 1km south west of the village. The site itself comprises former farm buildings that are now used for small-scale industry. The soils in the Aston Somerville area are predominantly Calcerous pelosols of the Evesham series but in the immediate vicinity of the subject site they are typical brown calcareous earths (Beard, Cope and Jones 1986).

St Mary's Church in Aston Somerville (WSM 01821) has some 13<sup>th</sup> Century parts including a priest's doorway of c1200. The benefice of Aston Somerville is noted in the taxation of Pope Nicholas IV dated 1291. The church is valued at £6 6s 8d. South of Aston Somerville church is an 'L' shaped medieval moat (WSM 01822).

Top Farm west of the church (WSM 03684) is stone built with a Cotswold slate roof and a Cider Mill while Manor (formerly Lower) Farm (WSM 24091) is recorded as having historic farm buildings. Ridge and furrow (WSM10129) with a north-south orientation is recorded south west of the church. Earthworks, probably related to the control of water survive to the south east of the church (WSM 10128).

In the field immediately west of the subject site (WSM 05506) indistinct linear features, probably forming field boundaries were noted on a National Monuments Record aerial photograph of 1980. A possible courtyard villa was noted on an aerial photograph of 1975 and subsequent fieldwalking produced Romano-British pottery of 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Further photographs taken by Pickering in 1984 show a series of linked enclosures, tracks and field systems. South of this field, linear features (WSM 05510) possibly forming the north east corner of a multi-period enclosure of unknown shape or size have been recorded as crop marks.

Archaeological Investigations on the Wormington to Tirley Gas Pipeline (WSM29633) by Cotswold Archaeology revealed prehistoric and Romano-British Activity. At a site close to Wormington (SP05153675) a crouched inhumation was revealed adjacent to a ditched trackway. The features were Middle/Late Iron Age and were associated with a number of storage pits, cremations and other associated features. A Romano-British enclosure was located to the east of the site with pottery suggesting a short-lived occupation from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888 the subject site is shown as a small orchard.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 1. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

#### 4.1.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits on the site comprised a stiff, homogenous olive green clay with very occasional rounded cobbles. In trench 2 to the north west of the site, a stiff blue-grey clay with frequent gravel inclusions (205) was present beneath the olive clay. Also in trench 2, a lens of yellow gravelly sand was recorded lying within the olive clay.

#### 4.1.2 Phase 2 Modern deposits

Three ceramic field drains were uncovered crossing trench 1 (104,106,109). These comprised of plain sections 315mm long and 105mm in diameter. The skeleton of a pig (107) was also uncovered towards the centre of trench 1 at a depth of 0.6m. It was articulated with the skull to the south. The hindquarters and legs were not uncovered and lay beneath the northern baulk of the trench. An iron ring was recovered from the nose. The skeleton was uncovered but not cleaned due to the possible health and safety risk. It is thought to be modern partly due to the relatively good preservation of the iron ring at the nose and the proximity of the former piggery less than ten metres to the south. A water supply pipe, foul water pipe and two electric cables were also present across the site.

## 5. Synthesis

No features of archaeological significance were uncovered during the works. Apart from bricks and other modern debris there were no finds not even of modern pottery.

## 6. Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of DND Holdings Ltd at Manor Farm, Aston Somerville, Worcestershire (NGR ref SP04053767; SMR ref WSM 34778). It is intended to demolish a former piggery, now a light industrial building, and erect a new building slightly to the west. A complex of features (WSM 05506, WSM 05510) thought to be of prehistoric and Romano-British date has been identified from aerial photography in the field to the west of the development site, next to the River Isbourne.*



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*Archaeological investigation in the footprint of the proposed building took place on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006. Due to the presence of overhead power lines and sub-surface services the area investigated was limited to five trenches, one of which was abandoned due to the discovery of an electric cable. Topsoil, a mid grey clay silt overlay a mixed clay subsoil which in turn overlay a homogenous generally stoneless olive clay. No finds or features of archaeological significance were uncovered. The articulated skeleton of a pig in trench 1 is thought to be modern and probably relates to the former piggery which occupied the site prior to conversion to its present industrial use.*

## 7. **The archive**

The archive consists of:

7	Trench record sheets AS41
2	Fieldwork progress records AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
1	Scale drawings
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Hartlebury Castle

Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

## 8. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, the client, DT Haley of DND Holdings and the curator Mike Glyde of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service.

## 9. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Tom Rogers. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Tom Rogers and Tom Vaughan, and illustration by Carolyn Hunt and Tom Rogers.

## 10. **Bibliography**

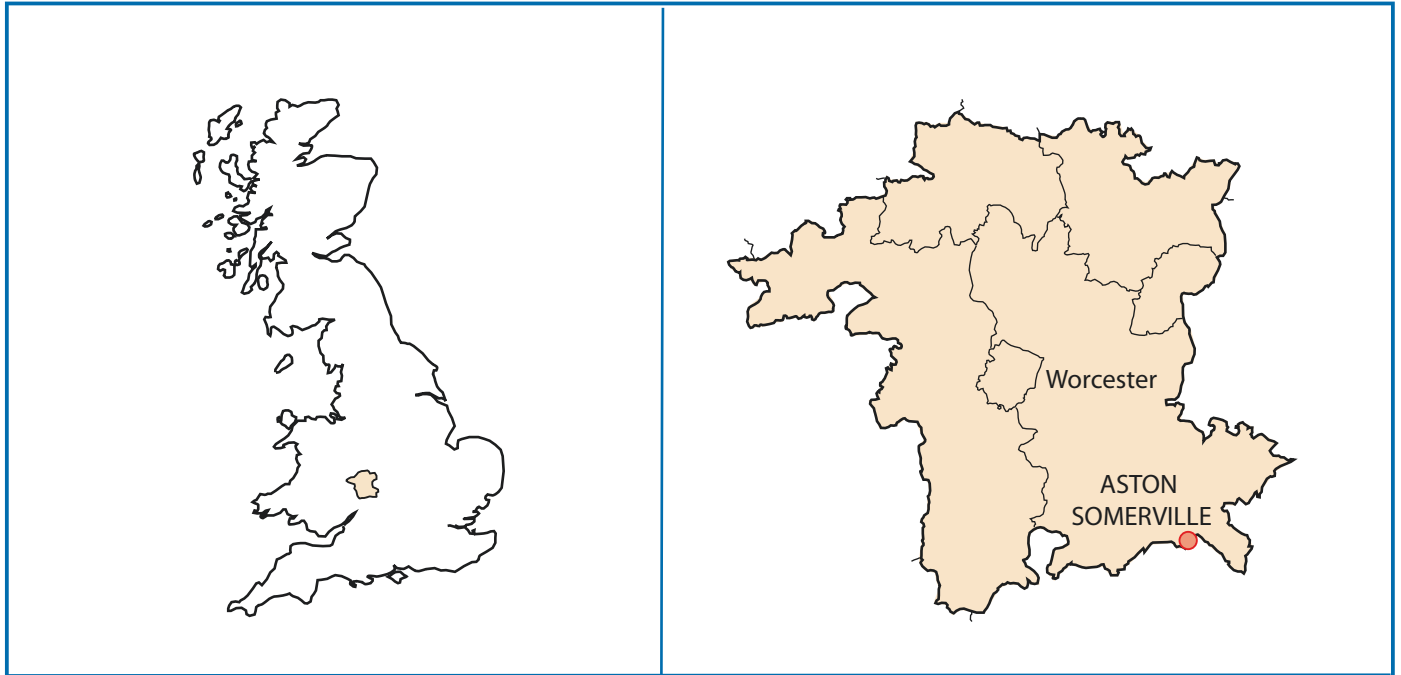
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HEAS, 2002 *Brief for programme of archaeological work at Manor Farm, Aston Somerville, Worcestershire* Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated 14th February 2002

HEAS, 2005 *Proposal for an archaeological investigation at Manor Farm, Aston Somerville, Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005, **P2861**

IFA, 1999 *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

Beard G R, Cope D W and Jones R J A 1986 *Soils of Worcester and the Malverns District*  
Soil Survey of England and Wales Sheet 150



Location of the site.

Figure 1

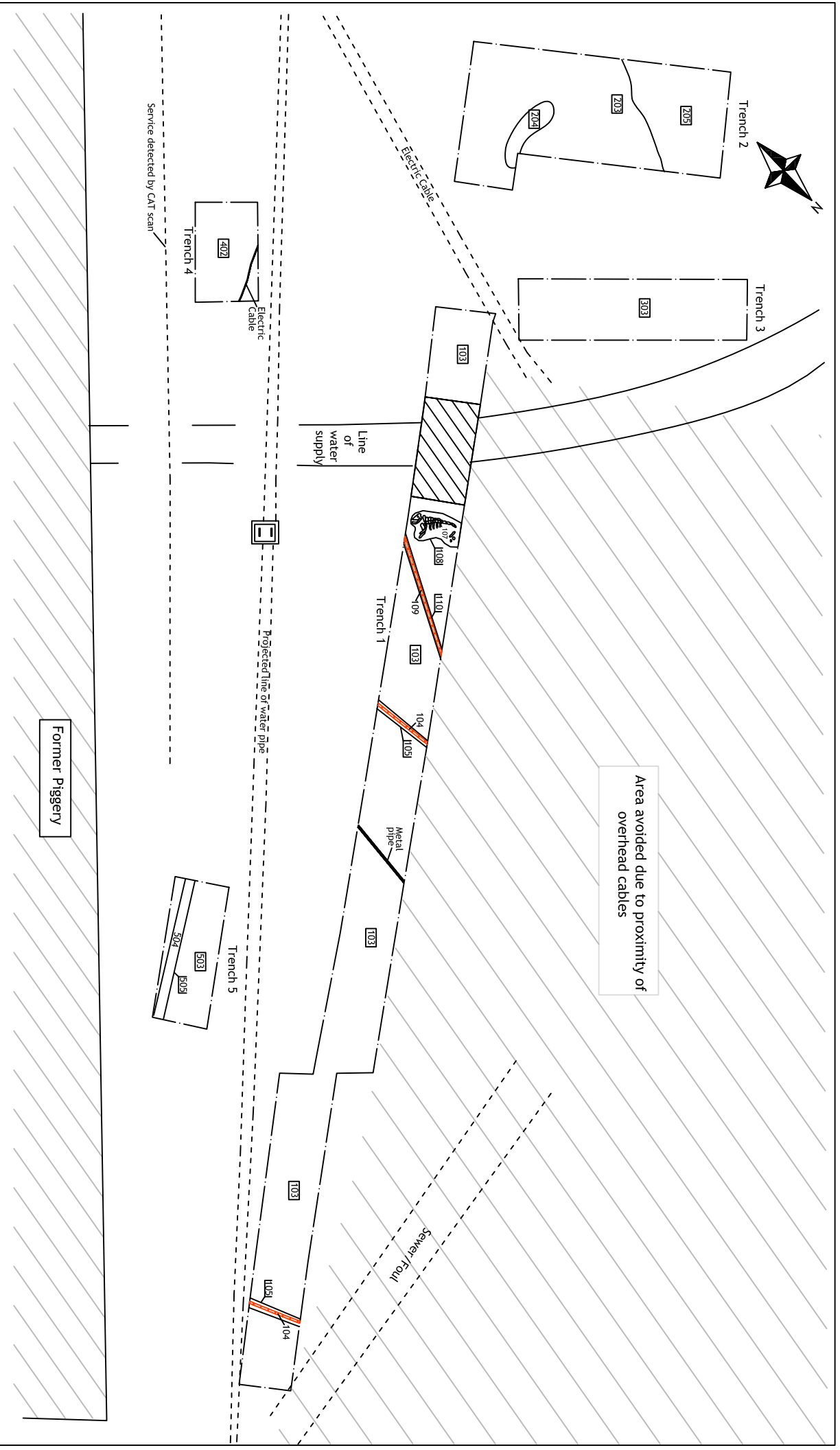


Figure 2. Trench locations and detail

**Illustrations**



Plate 1. Trench 1 facing north-east



Plate 2. Articulated pig skeleton 107, in trench 1, facing south-west



Plate 3. Trench 2 facing WNW



Plate 4. Trench 3, facing NNW



Plate 5. Trench 5 facing north-east, showing service trench 505

## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m Width: 1.7m Depth: 0.5 – 0.6m

Orientation: SW-NE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
101	Topsoil	Loose mid grey clay silt with very occasional small rounded pebbles and some bricks. Patches of modern burning near the surface.	0m-0.07m
102	Subsoil	Compact greenish-grey mixed clay	0.17-0.3m
103	Natural	Stiff, homogenous, olive green clay with very occasional rounded cobbles but generally stoneless	0.3m -
104	Field drain	Red ceramic pipe field drain consisting of sections 315mm long with a diameter of 105mm	0.17m – 0.27m
105	Cut for field drain	Cut not fully investigated	
106	Field drain	Red ceramic pipe field drain consisting of sections 315mm long with a diameter of 105mm	0.4m – 0.5m
107	Cut for field drain	Cut not fully investigated	
108	Field drain	Red ceramic pipe field drain consisting of sections 315mm long with a diameter of 105mm	0.4m – 0.6m
109	Cut for field drain	Cut not fully investigated	



**Trench 2**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 7.2m Width: 1.7m Depth: 0.6 – 0.7m

Orientation: WNW-ESE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
201	Topsoil	Loose mid grey clay silt with very occasional small rounded pebbles.	0-0.17m
202	Subsoil	Compact greenish-grey mixed clay	0.17-0.3m
203	Natural clay	Stiff, homogenous, olive green clay with very occasional rounded cobbles but generally stoneless	0.3m-
204	Natural lens	A lens of golden gravel within 203.	0.6m -
205	Natural clay	Stiff blue-grey clay with frequent gravel inclusions	0.7m

**Trench 3**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 6.4m Width: 1.7m Depth: 0.46-0.56m

Orientation: WNW-ESE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
301	Topsoil	Loose mid grey clay silt with very occasional small rounded pebbles.	0-0.3m
302	Subsoil	Compact greenish-grey mixed clay	0.3-0.5m
303	Natural	Stiff, homogenous, olive green clay with very occasional rounded cobbles but generally stoneless	0.5-

**Trench 4**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 2.8m Width: 1.7m Depth: 0.19m

Orientation: SW-NE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
401	Topsoil	Loose mid grey clay silt with very occasional small rounded pebbles.	0-0.19m
402	Subsoil	Compact greenish-grey mixed clay	0.19m -

**Trench 5**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 4m Width: 1.7m Depth: 0.8 – 0.9m

Orientation: SW-NE

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
501	Topsoil	Loose mid grey clay silt with very occasional small rounded pebbles.	0-0.2m
502	Subsoil	Compact greenish-grey mixed clay	0.2-0.4m
503	Natural	Stiff, homogenous, olive green clay with very occasional rounded cobbles but generally stoneless	0.4m-